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What is the value of your general aviation airport?

I'll bet a good beef steak that you don't know, and if you think you do know the value of your general aviation airport, I'll bet you another one that you are underestimating its value. General aviation filed 34.1 million flights and logged more than 28.3 million hours in 2006. Annually, flights by general aviation aircraft account for more than 145 million passengers and over 3 billion miles making it the largest "airline" in the world. General aviation employs 1.3 million people and contributes over \$60 billion to the U.S. economy. When the ancillary impacts of general aviation are added, the contribution is over \$150 billion. You would probably also be surprised to know there are more than 5,000 general aviation airports in the U.S. and for every commercial airline flight there are three general aviation flights that take off from one of these airports. Those are impressive figures. The Montana Technical Assistance Program (MontTAP) is working to provide owners of Montana's general aviation airports with a resource database to help their community realize the benefits general aviation has to offer. If, as a owner of a general aviation airport, you are not actively promoting the positive benefits your airport has to offer, it's time to re-evaluate your thinking.

The rural nature of Montana combined with its business environment, natural resources, and recreation opportunities puts your airport in a position for positive economic growth. We have wide open spaces, clean air and water, and remain one of the few affordable "last frontiers." People are coming to Montana in greater numbers to do business, visit, vacation, live and spend their money.



On average, one general aviation airport in the U.S. is closed each week. Stop for a moment and give this some thought. As an airport owner, if you are not willing to invest in your airport, then how can your airport make a positive contribution to your community? If your airport is viewed as a money eating albatross, it will probably be closed. On the other hand, if you are willing to invest in and promote your airport as a community asset, then your airport will be a source of public pride and contribute to the economic well-being of the community.

The owners of Montana's general aviation airports have two options when it comes to the success or failure of their airport. The first option is to leave your airport undeveloped and neglected. In the end, your airport will be viewed as a liability and a burden to the taxpayers of the community. This will ultimately force the closure of your airport in order to minimize liability and save the taxpayers a few dollars. Once the airport is closed, access to business, development and recreation opportunities which rely on general aviation will be lost. The second option is to promote and develop your airport into an asset capable of contributing economically to your community. Summarized below are just a few of the common businesses and services a small airport can help support. How would your community benefit if you choose to promote your airport?

- Agricultural Aerial Applicators
- Oil and Gas Industry
- Mail and Cargo
- Mining
- Utility Pipelines and Electrical Distribution
- Flight Instruction, Aircraft Maintenance and Aerial Surveys
- Aviation Fuel Sales

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- Car Rental, Motels and Restaurants
- Aircraft Manufacturing
- Fire Fighting Response Aircraft
- Medical Air Ambulance
- Private Pilots
- Hunting and Fishing
- Annual Fly-Ins
- Air Charter
- Hangar and Ground Leases
- Agricultural Leases
- Residential Airparks
- Game Management

As an owner of a general aviation airport, how can you develop your airport into a valued asset? The first and most important step is to provide leadership. Secondly, be aware of the resources available to you in promoting and managing your airport. Those resources include funding of capital improvements through the Federal Aviation Administration and the Montana Aeronautics Division, networking and mentoring through the Montana Airport Management Association, and using the MonTAP database. The MonTAP web site (www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation/montap) has many examples of useful resources covering a variety of operation maintenance and construction topics, as well as a contact list of individuals with expertise in various aviation related subjects. The MonTAP web site may not have all the answers, but the people listed as resource contacts have significant experience in aviation and have volunteered to answer your questions. Take a look at the MonTAP web site and let it help you answer the question: "What is the value of your general aviation airport?"

Happy Holidays!

Bailey Egan, Chairman

Montana Technical Assistance Program

Get Involved

MonTAP is looking for several interested owners, managers and airport board members to serve on the MonTAP steering committee. The steering committee will be responsible for developing and growing MonTAP resources and planning and promoting MonTAP sponsored seminars and social events. This is a great opportunity to get involved in helping develop a management tool for the day-to-day operation of Montana's general aviation airports. Without grassroots support, your airport and community are not realizing all the benefits that general aviation has to offer. We at MonTAP welcome the chance to visit with you about taking on an active role. If you're interested in this great opportunity please contact Bailey Egan at tvtranch@rangeweb.net or 406 447 6645.

Montana Aviation Conference

The Montana Aviation Conference will be held in Great Falls at the Heritage Inn, February 28 – March 1, 2008. The conference is a great opportunity for networking with other owners and managers of Montana's general aviation airports. Registration forms for the conference can be downloaded from the Montana Aeronautics Division web site www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation or contact Patty Kautz at 406 444 2506. Join us in Great Falls!



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